

Chapter 13

Training and Qualifications

The FWS Fire Management Handbook incorporates, by reference, all guidance in the [Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations Handbook](#) (Redbook, NFES #2724) Chapter 13 in addition to the following FWS specific clarifications:

Policy

Refuge personnel will meet NWCG PMS 310-1, Wildland Fire Qualification Guide training, experience, and fitness levels for prescribed fire and suppression positions unless otherwise specified in this handbook. All personnel funded with fire funds who are hired under a position description containing firefighting duties will meet PMS 310-1 requirements for the appropriate fire position. Individuals will not be assigned to duties for which they lack training and qualification. All personnel hired as primary firefighters must meet the arduous fitness standard to maintain full fire funding and if the position is career status, arduous is required to meet special retirement considerations for fire.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Exceptions – Refuges (Region 6 only) which do not have dedicated fire personnel, normally have a light wildland fire workload (minimal occurrence and acreage), do not perform initial actions using direct attack with hand tools, and have no cooperators/contractors to perform timely initial actions on refuge wildland fires can request an exception to NWCG fitness requirements for personnel classified as Firefighter Type 2, Firefighter Type 1, or Incident Commander Type 5. The request is to be made to the Regional Office and will involve review by the Regional Fire Management Coordinator and approval at the Regional Office level. Exception approvals are to be documented in the Refuge Fire Management Plan.

Factors that must be addressed within the request include but are not limited to: fuels, terrain, and tactics employed. Exceptions may be granted where wildland fires occur in light fuels over gentle terrain and initial actions using equipment such as dozers, tractor plows, and engines, as opposed to direct attack with hand tools, are performed. Refuges that demonstrate that an arduous physical fitness rating is not necessary to safely perform initial actions on a wildland fire may use **nonfire personnel** who qualify at the Moderate fitness level to perform initial actions.

Exceptions will apply only to initial actions. Should a wildland fire become an extended attack incident (Type III) where personnel are requested through the mobilization system, NWCG wildland fire qualified personnel will be used. No exceptions from arduous fitness levels are allowed for personnel hired as primary firefighters.

If a Refuge Manager or Project Leader feels the arduous fitness requirement is not appropriate in their local prescribed fire operations they may request an exception using the Prescribed Fire Crewmember Exception Request found at the end of this chapter to use the Prescribed Fire Crewmember (RXCM) qualification at a moderate fitness level in lieu of Firefighter Type 2 (FFT2). This qualification can not be used for suppression operations and prescribed fire burn plans must address contingency resources accordingly. A prescribed fire crew member can be used to hold an original prescribed fire perimeter while initial attack is being conducted on an escape by fully qualified suppression personnel. If suppression operations move into extended attack the entire fire must be staffed with

resources qualified for suppression operations. Exception approval must be documented in the applicable Refuge Fire Management Plan and shall be used on approved Service lands only. Local cooperators have the authority to determine appropriate qualifications for prescribed fires of low complexity. For more information see the PMS 310-1, Wildland Fire Qualification Guide, 2006. The Prescribed Fire Crewmember position (RXCM) is available in IQCS for use in tracking individual experience at a Moderate fitness level.

Fire Management Curriculum - The curriculum supporting fire management qualifications and position certification is explained in detail in the Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide, PMS 310-1 (<http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/docs/docs.htm>). Details relating to course descriptions and trainee/instructor qualifications are provided in the NWCG Field Manager's Course Guide, PMS 901-1 (NFES 2194) (http://www.fire.blm.gov/training/twt/sect_fieldmanagers_courseguides.htm). Training needs analyses are developed each year at refuge, regional and national levels. A refuge or region is responsible for sponsoring 100 and 200 level courses. The Regional Fire Management Coordinator (RFMC) determines intermediate level (300 and 400) training needs. Nominations for intermediate level courses should be routed to Regional Fire Management Coordinators for prioritization. Each course lead instructor provides successful trainees with certificates of completion upon conclusion of the course. All NWCG-approved training packages and course materials are readily available through the Publications Management System at the National Interagency Fire Center. NWCG National Fire Equipment System Catalog Part 2: Publications, PMS 449-2 (NFES 3362), identifies all materials and ordering procedures and is updated each spring.

National level (500 and 600) training needs are determined by the Fire Management Branch. A call for nominations to 500 level courses, except S-520/S-620, will be issued from the Fire Management Branch annually. Regional Fire Management Coordinators will prioritize these nominations within the region and forward a priority list and the nominations to the Fire Management Branch for national prioritization. Regional nominations should be consistent with regional or geographic board direction. Regions shall follow established Geographic Area and National Advanced Fire and Resource Institute protocol when nominating employees to S-520 or S-620.

Fire Management Instructors - Each Region is responsible for the selection, training, and certification of an adequate number of Fish and Wildlife Service instructors for fire management training. The funding for fire training instructors for local and geographic area level courses is a local or Regional fire management responsibility. The funding for fire training instructors for national level courses is a responsibility of the Fire Management Branch.

NWCG Course Equivalency – An equivalent course is determined by agency identified “evaluators” to be equal to a NWCG approved course. Awarding course equivalency is an agency specific responsibility. Only agencies have the authority to certify their employees meet NWCG training requirements when alternative course offerings are used. Courses being reviewed for equivalency must have:

- A reason the alternative course was used or developed;
- A benefit gained through awarding course equivalency such as:
 - cost savings

- broadened target audience
- enhanced learning experience for students

The Region seeking a course equivalency should conduct a detailed analysis and document their findings on the USFWS Course Equivalency template. The analysis will then be forwarded to the National Office for final approval. A new analysis must be completed when the equivalent NWCG course is revised to ensure course equivalency continues. All course equivalency determinations will be posted on the Fire Management Intranet (<https://intranet.fws.gov/>) found under Region 9 of the intranet site.

Incident Qualifications and Certification System - The Refuge Fire Management Officer is responsible for input and maintenance of all pertinent refuge employee data and for ensuring that employees are trained, qualified, and certified at levels which meet preplanned needs for appropriate management response, initial attack and prescribed fire, and for ensuring the accuracy of annual Incident Qualification Cards. The Certifying Official (i.e. Refuge Manager or Project Leader) confirms through the issuance of an incident qualification card that an individual is qualified to perform in a specified position. The Incident Qualification Card has a currency of 12 months.

The Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS) allows individuals to track experience gained on severity assignments where wildland fires do not occur. Individuals should use the event code PP (Preparedness/Preposition/Mobilization) in IQCS to track experience gained on severity assignments. All wildland fire experience gained while on a severity assignment will be coded to the appropriate incident identifier in IQCS.

Trainees may complete appropriate tasks in a position task book while on a severity assignment. Consult the PMS 310-1, Wildland Fire Qualification Guide, for event code definitions. A severity assignment does not constitute a wildfire, wildland fire use, or prescribed fire assignment until such time as an actual fire occurs.

Firefighting Personnel

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Specific Position Standards and Criteria

As of the release date of this document the standards established in this edition of the Fire Management Handbook are to be met by Service employees. Individuals who have begun the process of qualifying for a position listed below under the December 2005 edition can continue to use those standards as long as they complete the process prior to December 31, 2008.

Any individual who has begun the evaluation process need not take any newly required course(s) for that position. Additionally, personnel who are qualified in a position prior to the implementation of this revision may retain certification at the discretion of their Certifying Official. To qualify in any other position, the individual must meet the standards identified herein.

Engine Operator (ENOP)

REQUIRED TRAINING

Intermediate Fire Behavior (S-290)
Followership to Leadership (L-280)
Local or Geographic Area Engine Academy
Annual Refresher Training (RT-130)

REQUIRED EXPERIENCE

Firefighter (FFT1), Experience on engine crew
+
Successful completion of the [BLM Engine Operator taskbook](#)

PHYSICAL FITNESS LEVEL

Arduous

OTHER POSITION ASSIGNMENTS THAT WILL MAINTAIN CURRENCY:

None

ADDITIONAL TRAINING WHICH SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

Portable Pumps and Water Use (S-211)
Driving for the Fire Service (S-216)
Fire Operation in the Urban Interface (S-215)

Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Type 3 (RXB3)

REQUIRED TRAINING

Intermediate Fire Behavior(S-290)
Basic Wildland Fire Behavior Calculations (S-390)

*Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation (PFPI) or Prescribed Fire Burn Boss (RX-300)

Annual Refresher Training (RT-130)

REQUIRED EXPERIENCE

Incident Commander, Type 5

Or

Advanced Firefighter/Squad Boss

+

Successful Completion of the [RXB3 taskbook](#)

PHYSICAL FITNESS LEVEL

Moderate

OTHER POSITION ASSIGNMENTS THAT WILL MAINTAIN CURRENCY:

Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Type 2

Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Type 1

Fire Use Manager Type 1

Fire Use Manager Type 2

Prescribed Fire Manager Type 1

Prescribed Fire Manager Type 2

ADDITIONAL TRAINING WHICH SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

Field Observer (S-244)

Initial Attack Incident Commander (S-200)

Ignition Operations (S-234)

Limitations:

The RXB3 position use guidelines can be found in the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Reference Guide found at

http://www.nifc.gov/fire_policy/rx/rxfireguide.pdf.

*The Rx-300, Prescribed Fire Burn Boss, course is currently being revised and will become two courses, Rx-341, Prescribed Fire Plan Preparation, and Rx-301, Prescribed Fire Implementation. When this conversion occurs Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation will no longer be equivalent to the two new courses. The required training for the RXB3 will therefore drop Rx-300 or PFPI and add Rx-341 and Rx-301.

Incident Commander Type 5 (ICT5)**REQUIRED TRAINING**

Firefighter Type 1 (S-131)

Look Up, Look Down, Look Around (S-133)

Intermediate Fire Behavior (S-290)

Fire Operations in the Urban Interface (S-215) (required if wildland urban interface situations exist adjacent to or on the refuge).

Annual Refresher Training (RT-130)

REQUIRED EXPERIENCE

Advanced Firefighter/Squad Boss (FFT1)

+

Successful Completion of the [NWCG FFT1/ ICT5 textbook](#)

PHYSICAL FITNESS LEVEL

Arduous

OTHER POSITION ASSIGNMENTS THAT WILL MAINTAIN CURRENCY:

Incident Commander Type 4 (ICT4)

Fire Fighter Type 1 (FFT1)

ADDITIONAL TRAINING WHICH SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

Wildland Fire Chain Saws (S-212)

Portable Pumps and Water use (S-211)

Note: the Firefighter Type 1 (FFT1) and Incident Commander Type 5 (ICT5) Position Task Books have been combined. However, *the positions have not been combined*. The FFT1 tasks are completed only once; additional tasks must be completed to meet the ICT5 level. The FFT1 and ICT5 tasks can be completed simultaneously.

Faller Class A/B/C**REQUIRED TRAINING**

Wildland Fire Chain Saws (S-212)

Annual Chainsaw Refresher Training

REQUIRED EXPERIENCE

Successful Completion of the [BLM Faller A/B/C textbook](#)

PHYSICAL FITNESS LEVEL

Arduous

OTHER POSITION ASSIGNMENTS THAT WILL MAINTAIN CURRENCY:

None

ADDITIONAL TRAINING WHICH SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

None

Additional Information:

- All FWS saw operators on wildland and prescribed fire incidents must complete the NWCG S-212 course, including the position Task Book appropriate to the “A” class operations

- "A" positions can fell trees up to 8 inches DBH, "B" positions can fell trees up to 24 inches DBH, and "C" positions have no limit on tree size

Prescribed Fire Crew Member (RXCM)**REQUIRED TRAINING**

Firefighter Training (S-130)

Introduction to Fire Behavior (S-190)

Introduction to ICS (I-100)

Human Factors on the Fireline (L-180)*

Annual Refresher Training (RT-130)

REQUIRED EXPERIENCE

None

PHYSICAL FITNESS LEVEL

Moderate

OTHER POSITION ASSIGNMENTS THAT WILL MAINTAIN CURRENCY:

None

ADDITIONAL TRAINING WHICH SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

Wildland Fire Chain Saws (S-212)

Portable Pumps and Water Use (S-211)

Additional Information:

- L-180, Human Factors on the Fireline has been incorporated into the 2003 revision of S-130, Firefighter Training.
- Upon the release of this version of the Fire Management Handbook the RXCM position may be used by personnel on approved Service lands in lieu of Firefighter Type 2 (FFT2) if proper authorization has been granted by the appropriate regional line officer. Approval procedures are outlined earlier in this chapter of the Fire Management Handbook, 2008.

Refuge Name: _____

Provide a situational assessment of the refuge's prescribed fire program:

1. How many prescribed fires do you anticipate will require the use of the Prescribed Fire Crew Member (RXCM) qualification per year? _____

2. Describe the refuge's previous experience using the moderate fitness rating on prescribed fire projects. _____

Provide a hazard assessment:

1. Discuss the range of fuels to be burned using the RXCM qualification and the associated fire behavior. _____

2. Describe refuge topography and walking conditions. _____

Describe the hazard controls the refuge will put in place to minimize risk to employees with the RXCM qualification:

1. Can smoke exposure be limited during operations? _____

2. What resources are available for suppression operations requiring arduous fitness in the event of an escape requiring immediate initial action and can contingency plans properly cover this situation? _____

3. Describe the tactics and equipment used by the RXCM position. _____

Provide an evaluation plan in which an exception decision will be monitored and reviewed:

Prepared by/Date

Refuge Manager/Project Leader/Date

Regional Fire Mgmt. Coordinator/Date
Approval/Date

Regional Line Officer